

Letter to Council

February 24, 2013

Congregation Council
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
2515 Waugh Drive
Houston, TX 77006

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Part 2 Access to Information Initiative

In spite of my prior suggestions that we have open access to non-exempt material, we still do not have it. We have censorship. Grace Lutheran Church (a non-profit corporation) has a duty to the congregation. The Texas Non-Profit Corporation Act states in part:

TEX. CIV. CODE ANN. § 1396-2.23 : Texas Statutes - Article 1396-2.23: BOOKS AND RECORDS

A. Each corporation shall keep correct and complete books and records of account and shall keep minutes of the proceedings of its members, board of directors, and committees having any authority of the board of directors and shall keep at its registered office or principal office in this State a record of the names and addresses of its members entitled to vote.

B. **A member** of a corporation, on written demand stating the purpose of the demand, has the right to examine and copy, in person or by agent, accountant, or attorney, at any reasonable time, **for any proper purpose, the books and records of the corporation relevant to that purpose, at the expense of the member.**

I am promoting open access to non-exempt material. Our present policy does not go far enough to protect and expand access to non-exempt material. I favor the sharing of knowledge and I oppose censorship. I support transparency. **While leaders have the power and ability to deprive others of access, they have no such right.**

For clarity, this Access to Information Initiative deals only with non-exempt material. This material has already been published, or should have been published. I am especially referring to material associated with public meetings that members may attend if they so choose. I am not referring to properly exempted material associated with properly closed meetings.

It would be poor practice to charge members a fee to access the minutes of a business meeting, committee reports, correspondences, and other such material. Charging a fee to access what they have already paid to produce would be silly. It is sillier to invite members to an open business meeting and then hide material that was published, or should have been published at the meeting.

All non-exempt material belongs to each member and should be readily accessible. When a member requests non-exempt material, a "proper purpose" should include the fact that the material already belongs him.

Even though I have not seen our church Bylaws, I believe censorship of non-exempt information in any form violates the Bylaws. It is difficult to imagine a seminary teaching

new preachers to hide non-exempt material from any church member for any purpose, thereby violating **state law** and probably the **bylaws**.

It would be good for those who have an unexplainable urge to promote censorship to sublimate this energy into producing a digital library for the congregation. One activity is no more costly than the other, but one is much more beneficial.

Continued false assertions by church leaders

I received an email on Jan 30, 2013 at 12:19 PM from Nicholes (Nico) Candelaria, a junior council member, wherein he referred to a situation where my access to records was denied on the basis of an agreement that Pastor Lura and I made. Nico also stated "This is a Church, not a corporation." On Jan 30, 2013 at 6:07 PM I emailed him back stating inter alia "I never had any agreement with Pastor Lura that involved any denial of copies of past non-exempt records. I hope you will tell me your source of information." At this time I still do not know his source; I suppose revealing it would be embarrassing.

On Jan 30, 2013 at 12:40 PM Steve Walker emailed me with more false assertions. Steve Walker and Pastor Lura Groen appear, once again, to be near the singularity of false assertions. Steve and Lura also appear to be the most diligent at hiding from the congregation certain information and facts. This appears to be a coordinated and sneaky effort. The continued false assertions and manipulation tactics that I continue to see are uncalled for. There appears to be little if any accountability. Sadly, as this concerns and affects us all, and though it is embarrassing, it is time for this to become public.

It would be thoughtful of Council to make the GLC Bylaws and the MGP Bylaws and other such material available. It would be nice to have this online. When I search for *LGBT* on the Grace Website ("lgbt site:http://www.gracelutheran-houston.org/") I get 71 results. When I search for *bylaws* I get nothing. When I search for *constitution* I get 3 results that link only to blogs. I hate to question anyone's priorities, but surely we can find time to keep members better informed. It would be nice if all Council members, including junior members, would be aware that this church is in fact a corporation.

Step one of disciplinary process

On Sunday, February 24, 2013, before church Pastor Lura told me that she was using the **first step in the disciplinary process** to inform me to (1) remove from the Internet my letter of January 30, 2013 and (2) remove my Website, *Grace Lutheran Church Landscaping Houston Texas 77006*.

My letter of January 30, 2013: Pastor Lura told me that "it's not something we want." I see no evidence that Council has addressed this matter. Surely if it had, this would be part of the monthly minutes of at least one business meeting, unless somebody is again trying to hide information. At this point I do not know who "we" is. Pastor Lura told me that the letter was "embarrassing" especially regarding the secretary. I see no evidence that the secretary is complaining. My feeling is that he is probably glad I wrote the letter and made it public. I offered to discuss the matter with the secretary to see what his position might be. At least three times Pastor Lura adamantly told me that she wanted me to not discuss anything with the secretary. I feel like somebody is trying to hide something. *I smell a possum in the wood shed.*

This matter does not involve material in a personnel file; it involves a public conversation in a public meeting.

My landscaping Website: Even though Pastor Lura welcomes my volunteering with landscaping, she gave no reason for her objection to my Website. I did not use corporate branding or a color scheme of the church. The footer states "This is my private Website. This site does not represent any group or community. Contact: charlie.dean81@gmail.com." For my Website to be useful people must be able to find it. It would make little sense to hide it or make it hard to find. All members have an interest in church landscaping. It is hard to imagine how my site could interfere with any legitimate purpose or endeavor of the church.

Unspecific complaint: Pastor Lura failed to explain what part of the Bylaws I allegedly violated. Surely the church's disciplinary procedure does not provide for removing a member simply because somebody does not like something. Clearly some church leaders do not like me exposing their concealment against the congregation. Were I operating a house of prostitution, or selling child pornography, or having an affair with married women in the church, or operating a loan shark business, or the like, I could understand some ecclesiastical reason or some reason based in the church bylaws for invoking a disciplinary process. Thus far the complaint is so unspecific that I do not know what the violation is alleged to be.

Some church leaders are unqualified to judge me: The church leaders (officers) who were present at the open Council Business Meeting of October 7, 2012 should disqualify themselves from judging me. All participated in the cover-up. In the event they refuse to recuse themselves, then perhaps we will have the equivalent of *the foxes guarding the hen house*.

Summary

It appears to me that Steve and Lura are using their leadership positions to abuse the process. Though I only met with Lura on 02/24/2013, I have no doubt that Steve is complicity. I urge Council to appoint an unbiased committee, perhaps using members of another church, to investigate this matter.

I am willing to meet with anyone one-on-one to discuss this. If Council wants to discuss it, I suggest it be done publicly with plenty of advanced notice to all members. Please make this letter part of your next open business meeting.

C Dean

Charlie Dean

Attachments:

Appendix I, My email exchange with Nicholes Candelaria
Appendix II, My email exchange with Steve Walker

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Appendix I
My email exchange with Nicholes Candelaria



Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com>

Grace Lutheran Church Houston Texas: Letter to Council - January 30, 2013
3 messages

Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com>
To: "Nick Candelaria" <nrcand@gmail.com>

Wed, Jan 30, 2013 at 11:37 AM

Please accept a digital copy of my letter to Council.

Grace Lutheran Church Houston Texas: Letter to Council - January 30, 2013

<http://ia601600.us.archive.org/22/items/ElcaGraceLutheranChurchHoustonTexasCensorshipQuorum/LetterToCouncil.1.30.13.pdf>

<http://archive.org/details/ElcaGraceLutheranChurchHoustonTexasCensorshipQuorum>

Charlie Dean
[713-956-5968](tel:713-956-5968) Phone number
[713-956-5902](tel:713-956-5902) Fax
[903-926-2948](tel:903-926-2948) Cell phone

Nicholes Candelaria <nrcand@gmail.com>
To: Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com>

Wed, Jan 30, 2013 at 12:19 PM

Mr. Dean,
I'm aware of your concerns and I was copied on an email detailing your requests to make digital copies of past church records. This request was denied as part of an agreement made between you and pastor Lura as you began attending this church. I'm not aware of instances mentioned in your letter where business did not go as smoothly as we'd like but I doubt this was a coordinated effort to hide information from Church members. This is a Church, not a corporation.

In the future, please refrain from emailing me directly as I'm only a junior council member, and this is a matter that must be considered by the council as a whole, and is not subject to the whim of one council member alone.

Nico
[Quoted text hidden]

Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com>
To: Nicholes Candelaria <nrcand@gmail.com>

Wed, Jan 30, 2013 at 6:07 PM

Nico,
I do not know what a junior council member is.

I never had any agreement with Pastor Lura that involved any denial of copies of past non-exempt records. I hope you will tell me your source of information.

Charlie

[Quoted text hidden]

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Charlie Dean

[713-956-5968](tel:713-956-5968) Phone number

[713-956-5902](tel:713-956-5902) Fax

[903-926-2948](tel:903-926-2948) Cell phone

Appendix II
My email exchange with Steve Walker



Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com>

Letter to Council -- January 30, 2013

4 messages

Steve Walker <Steve_J_Walker@msn.com> Wed, Jan 30, 2013 at 12:40 PM To: charlie.dean81@gmail.com
Cc: hal_core@msn.com, rrbratsven2001@yahoo.com, bcarroll67@live.com, justchuck2010@gmail.com, suzannahbryan@gmail.com, nrcand@gmail.com, lura.groen@gmail.com

Charlie I am replying to you as a member of the Mutual Ministry Team.

You know the council has not ignored you communication but referred it to the Mutual Ministry Team to clear up your misunderstanding.

Also you are aware that in your meeting with Mutual Ministry it was stated...

"Pastor Lura affirmed Charlie's desire to want to contribute to the congregation and assured him that the documents he requested would be pulled together and given to him, though it might take some time, acknowledging that the organization of said documents is probably not as good as it should be. She then stated that handling digital material on behalf of the congregation was not yet appropriate for Charlie as there is not yet assurance that it would not be misused. This reluctance is based both on communication from the synod office about the circumstances of Charlie's removal from another congregation and a couple of email communications that he has had at Grace."

"Pastor Lura admonished Charlie that such sharing of confidential information is inappropriate, regardless of whether it is misrepresented or not."

Charlie, please remove any digital copies refereeing to Grace that you have posted to the web. Mutual Ministry will meet and confer with Council at there next Meeting.

Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com> To: Steve Walker <Steve_J_Walker@msn.com>

Steve, The paragraph that you quoted was not stated in the Mutual Ministry meeting. Charlie [Quoted text hidden] ---
- Charlie Dean 713--956--5968 Phone number 713--956--5902 Fax 903--926--2948 Cell phone

Wed, Jan 30, 2013 at 6:10 PM

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=41d5f07741&view=pt&search=sent&th=13c8cc3a06b563c8> 1/2

1/31/13 Gmail - Letter to Council - January 30, 2013

Steven Walker <steve_j_walker@msn.com>

To: Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com>, "lura.groen@gmail.com" <lura.groen@gmail.com>

Yes Charlie it was and Bridget provided you with a copy of the minutes, and all four members of the Mutual Ministry have signed a copy.

Wed, Jan 30, 2013 at 6:17 PM

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Date: Wed, 30 Jan 2013 18:10:15 --0600 Subject: Re: Letter to Council -- January 30, 2013
From: charlie.dean81@gmail.com To: Steve_J_Walker@msn.com [Quoted text hidden]

Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com> To: Steven Walker <steve_j_walker@msn.com>

Wed, Jan 30, 2013 at 6:47 PM

"
"

Steve, Bridget handed me a document. It was not accurate and did not merit any action on my part.
Charlie [Quoted text hidden]

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=41d5f07741&view=pt&search=sent&th=13c8cc3a06b563c8> 2/2